

REFERENCE

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4. MELANISM IN THE JUNGLE CAT, *FELIS CHAUS*
GULDENSTAEDT (FELIDAE: CARNIVORA)

In connection with the revision of Indian Felidae, one of us (S.C.), while studying the material of Bombay Natural History Society, came across three melanistic specimens of the Jungle Cat, *Felis chaus* Gldenstaedt from India. Although Pocock (1939) and Roberts (1977) have earlier reported the occurrence of melanistic specimens of the Jungle Cat, *F. c. prateri* Pocock from Karachi, Tharparker and Thatta, all in Pakistan, there is no record of melanism in the Indian subspecies of this cat. It is being recorded in the present note. The details of the specimens are given below. External measurements were taken by the collector. The cranial measurements are taken after Pocock (1939). Measurements are given in millimetres and abbreviations used according to Chakraborty (1983).

BNHS Reg. No. 6044; study skin: loc. Arcadia Tea Estate, Tamil Nadu (?); 22 Feb. 1940; coll. P. N. Jackson.

No pattern could be marked; entire dorsum including tail dark brown, with some fine pale cream grizzling except in mid-dorsal region; undersurface similar but pale bands broader than those of dorsum, particularly on the chin, throat and belly, giving a somewhat speckled appearance on venter.

BNHS Reg. No. 6035; study skin and damaged skull; loc. Belgaum, Karnataka; 5 Dec. 1912; coll. T. J. Spooner.

Measurements: Hb 520; Tl. 292; Hf 119; E 57.

Partially melanistic; dorsum including tail dark brown; sides agouti; throat, a portion of chest and undersurface of forelimbs infused with dark brown hairs.

BNHS Reg. No. 6018; study skin (damaged) and skull; loc. Tikoli, 22.5 km from Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh; Feb. 1914; coll. W. E. Jardine.

Measurements: Gl. 111; cb 100; pm⁴ 11, M³ 9; M₂ 7; Pw 33; Iw 19; Zw 72; Mw 24.

Entire dorsum including tail and limbs dark brown; sides of the body and cheek having some fine pale cream hairs.

Discussion: It is a known fact that melanin pigmentation is more strongly developed in the hot humid areas (Gloger's Rule). The two specimens from south India support this hypothesis, but the specimen from Gwalior and those reported from Pakistan are exceptions, being inhabitants of warm, dry areas.

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5. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON FOOD HABITS OF JACKAL (*CANIS AUREUS*) IN KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR, AS SHOWN BY SCAT ANALYSIS

Food habits of jackal were studied in Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur from September, 1984 to August, 1985 by scat analysis. Altogether 102 scat samples were collected and analysed. The hair samples from the scats were identified in the field with naked eye comparing with hair samples kindly given by Bombay Natural History Society. Results are given in Table 1. Samples collected from December to March had *Zizyphus jujuba* fruits. Seeds of Date palm (*Phoenix sylvestris*) and Jamun (*Syzygium cumini*) were also observed in their scats during June and July respectively.

TABLE 1
PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF EACH FOOD ITEM OF JACKAL AT KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR (SEP. 1984-AUG. 1985)

Food items	No. of times occurred	Percentage
Rodents	45	26.5
Birds	41	24.1
Grass	34	20.0
Fruits	28	16.5
Insects	7	4.1
Snake	7	4.1
Chital	4	2.4
Nilgai	2	1.2
Fish	2	1.2

Feathers of coot (*Fulica atra*) and Grey partridge (*Francolinus pondicerianus*) were identified from their scats.

Chital and Nilgai hair were found in 2.4 and 1.2 per cent of the remains. However this low figure probably represents scavenged food rather than prey killed by the jackals themselves.

According to Schaller (1967), jackals occasionally catch hares. Even though hares (*Lepus nigricollis ruficaudatus*) are fairly common in Bharatpur, their remains were not seen in jackal scats. This may be largely because of my inability to identify the hair of hare in the field. Similarly remains of Blackbuck (*Antilope cervicapra*), Sambar (*Cervus unicolor*), feral cattle (*Bos indicus*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) and Rhesus macaque (*Macaca mulatta*) were also not observed.

Broad ventral scales of snakes, possibly of python, were also seen. Whether they kill python or scavenge is not known. However, three jackals trying to attack a 2 m. long python